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THE RIGHT TO DEVELOPMENT

Letter dated 6 October 1998 from the Permanent Representative of Sudan to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

I have the honour to enclose a letter signed by the Minister of Finance and Economy of the Republic of the Sudan dealing with the American attack on a pharmaceutical plant in Khartoum, Sudan, on 20 August 1998. As you can see from the contents, the United States of America has engaged in a series of actions against the Sudan that clearly inhibit its development and the economic well-being of its people. These actions obviously violate many fundamental human rights including the right to development. It is also a clear manifestation of unilateral coercive actions, acts that impede the rights to life, health, work and the fight against poverty.

I kindly request that this letter be circulated as an official document of the fifty-fifth session of the Commission on Human Rights.

(signed): Ibrahim Mirghani IBRAHIM
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

Annex

As you are aware, the United States of America staged a stealthy air attack, on 20 August 1998, against a pharmaceutical plant located in Khartoum. The plant was completely destroyed, while the surrounding area, which is heavily populated, has been seriously affected by the blast.

A preliminary estimate of the value of assets destroyed is US$ 40 million, while 309 employees have lost their jobs and one of them since then having died. In addition, the Sudan has to import about 50 per cent of its requirements for pharmaceutical drugs previously provided by the factory. Besides, the potential drug export proceeds have been lost. The USA attack has also seriously undermined the investment environment which is effectively supported by the Government's ongoing economic policies and programmes.

The American Administration has formally stated its allegations that "this factory is producing chemical weapons and owned by Osama Ben Laden", a former Saudi businessman, living in Afghanistan and accused of terrorist acts against the United States.

The Sudan Government has reaffirmed that this factory is privately owned and registered as a limited liability company under the Sudan 1925 Companies Act, and it was one of the most successful ventures in our industrial sector. It was partially financed by the Preferential Trade Area (PTA) Bank of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, to the tune of US$ 5.6 million.

The factory was exclusively designed to produce drugs, including the most vitally needed anti-malaria drugs and antibiotics, and to export human and veterinary drugs to neighbouring countries. In this respect, it had recently signed a contract under the United Nations programme for the supply of essential drugs to Iraq.

Several engineers, architects and experts, including a British and an American expert who had contributed to the erection of the plant, have unequivocally stated that the plant was neither equipped nor had the capacity to produce any chemical weapons. Other architects, including three Jordanians who had taken part in the erection of the plant, have refuted the USA's allegations and have reasserted that the plant was not designed to produce chemical weapons. They have also refuted the allegation linking it to Saudi dissident Osama Ben Laden.

At this juncture, I thought I should brief you on the developments of the USA's hostile attitudes towards Sudan that eventually culminated in open military aggression.

In the year 1989, the United States of America began to exert various degrees of pressure against the Sudan through a series of hostile actions and attitudes aimed at isolating it, politically and economically, from the world community.

Such hostile attitudes were initially manifested by suspension of wheat shipments to Sudan, followed by attempts to jeopardize efforts to reaching a peaceful settlement to the conflict in southern Sudan, as demonstrated by the outcome of the Abuja talks and the subsequent Intergovernmental Authority on Drought and Development talks in Nairobi and Addis Ababa.

Efforts were increasingly made by the USA to undermine Sudan's position at international and financial institutions, including attempts to suspend Sudan's membership in such vital institutions as the International Monetary Fund, coupled with termination of all loans and grants from funding agencies and donors.

By the year 1993, the USA's campaign against the Sudan had developed into an open stand-off by the USA's inclusion of Sudan in the list of countries accused of harbouring terrorism. This step was followed by the imposition of a trade and economic embargo against Sudan.

Taking a further unprecedented step, the USA then decided to openly wage war against the Sudan through instigating its African neighbours who had received generous material support to undertake hostile actions against Sudan. In this respect, I should refer to the call voiced by former USA National Security Adviser, Mr. Anthony Lake, for the need to contain Sudan through arming some of its neighbours. Mr. Lake's call turned out to be official USA policy when the American Administration announced the allocation of US$ 20 million in support of Sudan's neighbours.

Based on the same USA Administration policy, the rebel movement in southern Sudan continued to receive vital military and logistical support provided by the USA, in an explicit attempt to destabilize the current Government.

Following the above narration of the developments of Sudan-USA relations, I would like to assure you that the Sudan Government has never been involved in terrorist activities. Far from nurturing or harbouring terrorism, the Sudan has actually been victimized by terrorist acts including hijacking of Sudanese aeroplanes as well as facing serious bombing incidents in areas of metropolitan Khartoum and the danger posed by the landmines in its southern and eastern territories.

Notwithstanding Sudan's genuine efforts to come to terms with the USA, all endeavours have proved futile. In this regard, the Sudan Government has produced an official statement which condemned the recent terrorist attacks on the USA embassies in Nairobi and Dar-es-Salaam. Heedless of Sudan's eminent goodwill, the USA Administration has delivered two non-paper memorandums to Sudan expressing its explicit intent to destroy the Sudanese economy.

As a signatory to all relevant regional and international conventions, Sudan is a peace-loving country, seeking support by the international community against the USA's serious breach of international law and conventions.

Based on the above, we feel that the Sudan has been unjustifiably subjected to injustice and aggression. I have therefore availed myself of this opportunity to brief you on recent developments and their background.

We are confident that this matter will receive your highest consideration, as the USA's attitude negatively affects our relations with the IMF.

(Signed): Dr. Abdul Wahab OSMAN
Minister of Finance and Economy